



A Guide to

Evaluating the Universal Design Performance of Products

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This document contains the designers' version of the Universal Design Performance Measures for Products. These Performance Measures are intended to guide the development of more universally usable products.

The Performance Measures are based on the Principles of Universal Design (The Center for Universal Design, 1997), beginning with the initial, overall concept of Equitable Use (Principle One) and proceeding to the physical detail of Size and Space for Approach and Use (Principle Seven). Depending on the nature of the product, some Principles may not apply, and it may sometimes be more effective to apply them out of order.

The value of these Performance Measures lies in each data point, which identifies a specific strength or weakness that is important for some portion of the user population. These Measures are not intended to be used as a "score sheet" to calculate overall totals or averages as a measure of a product's usability. Such absolute values are meaningless in universal design. Rather, this chart provides a type of graphic profile of usability features

The Universal Design Performance Measures for Products are useful for:

- Identifying potential areas for improvement for a product;
- Comparing relative strengths of similar products; and
- Identifying particular strengths of a product such as for marketing purposes.

Users of these Performance Measures should keep in mind:

- The wording in the Performance Measures is intentionally generic to apply to many types of products; not all Measures apply to all products and some interpretation may be required to apply some of the Performance Measures.
- The quality of the results achieved applying the measures may depend on the knowledge base of the respondent. Each measure represents the needs of some individuals and background knowledge of a diversity of human needs is useful when using these Performance Measures.
- It is important to apply the Performance Measures separately to each phase of use of the product, such as reading and opening the package, reading and understanding the instructions, using the product, maintaining the product, disposal, etc.

The Performance Measures are not intended to serve as a substitute for user testing or a method of empathizing with users who have disabilities – closing your eyes is not the same as being blind. However, this tool may help to identify needs for user testing and to develop effective and appropriate testing procedures.

For more information, please contact:

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The Center for Universal Design (1997). The Principles of Universal Design. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina State University.